

Continued Council Meeting—October 21, 2014

The continued meeting of the Council of the Town of Altavista was held in the Council Chambers of the J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street on October 21, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Mayor Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Council members
present:

Mayor Michael Mattox
Mrs. Beverley Dalton
Mr. Charles Edwards
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Bill Ferguson
Mr. Timothy George

Council members
absent:

Mr. Jay Higginbotham

Also present:

Mr. Waverly Coggsdale, Town Manager
Mr. David Garrett, Public Works/Utilities Director
Mrs. Mary Hall, Administration

Institute of Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) presentation/proposal

Mr. Coggsdale advised he has had conversations with Mr. Scott Lowman, Institute of Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) in regards to the ongoing research on remediation efforts at the Wastewater Treatment Plant emergency overflow pond. He advised he and Mr. Michael Duncan have been communicating and scheduled a meeting with the Public Works/Utility Committee. After which they were asked to present their proposal to full Council.

Mr. Duncan addressed Council and presented them with a proposal addressing the PCB remediation. Mr. Duncan is proposing a 12 – 18 month research plan which would be testing an *in situ* approach utilizing biotechnology to create root zone reactors harboring a range of microorganisms capable of metabolizing PCBs. The anticipated cost of implementation of the research plan would cost approximately \$26,000, with an additional \$10,000 of sample testing.

Mayor Mattox asked Mr. Duncan to explain risk mitigation.

Mr. Duncan referred to a graphic example stating one of the reports people were on site in their street clothes and when dealing with contaminants, they have guidelines to mitigate risk. If IALR is asked to take a part in this research they would take a very assertive step to minimize risk for researchers and site workers as well as liability for the Town of Altavista.

Mrs. Dalton asked Mr. Duncan to advise what has happened before that might indicate this process might work.

Mr. Lowman advised the IALR specifically studies bacteria that lives inside of plants; increases plant growth and helps plants tolerate stress. University of Maryland is working with bacteria that bring down PCBs; IALR is proposing to put it all together. They propose to establish switch grass that can provide a vehicle for the roots to penetrate. They are proposing to put together University of Maryland and their sources and reminded Council this is a hypothesis. They propose to do it in a fashion to tell if this will work or not. Having the proper controls and being able to track over time that PCBs are being lowered.

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Mrs. Dalton asked Mr. Lowman to describe the process.

Mr. Lowman advised the PCB contaminated soil will be mixed and divided into pots of equal size. Baseline soil samples will be taken and treatment groups will be initiated so they can see what happens over time. This will be a controlled study. He noted the timeframe is two years.

Mrs. Dalton questioned if switch grass was the plant material in this process.

Mr. Lowman stated it was. Switch grass has roots to penetrate; a perennial grass which has huge root systems.

Mrs. Dalton asked Mr. Lowman about their relationship with Mr. Mead Anderson and Department of Environment Quality.

Mr. Lowman stated he has known Mr. Anderson since 2003 and has worked with him on other sites located in Lynchburg, Virginia. He advised he has followed the activities of Altavista through Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Edwards suggested Mr. Lowman follow up with Mr. Steve Rock, EPA representative. Mr. Edwards noted Mr. Rock is interested in the technology of remediating the PCBs. He felt Mr. Rock and Mr. Scott Rice take the same position of seeing what happens with the PCBs through technology. He felt DEQ was less forgiving. Mr. Edwards feels there is a biological solution to the PCBs which will be an advantage to the citizens of Altavista and the world.

Mr. Duncan stated that part of the allure for him is the scope of the problem; this is a problem that exists all over the place. Anything that can be done to solve the problem; even half way solved is a huge leap. He stated IALR is a state agency and would be working on par with DEQ. They would also be reaching out for funding from the federal government for these research projects.

Mr. Lowman noted IALR has eight years experience working with switch grass

Mr. Duncan referred to Phase 2 of their project stating it would not be inexpensive and they would seek as much funding as possible.

Mayor Mattox asked for information on Phase 2.

Mr. Duncan advised Phase 2 would consist of taking the experiment to the ground.

Mr. George asked if they were comfortable with where the PCBs are now.

Mr. Duncan stated in terms of the PCBs just sitting there, he is comfortable with that.

Mayor Mattox referred this matter to the November 11, 2014 Town Council meeting for consideration.

Mayor Mattox asked if there was anything else to bring before Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Michael E. Mattox, Mayor

J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Clerk

